

SYP London
Autumn Conference 2024

Publishing Past, Present & Future

Saturday 30th November |
Kingston University | 9.30 - 5pm





Schedule

THE COURTYARD

THE PROJECT SPACE

Doors open

10:00

Welcome & Keynote

11:00

Commercial Fiction:
A Guide for Aspiring Publishers

Biblio for Beginners

12:00

Books in Translation

Literary Scouting

Foyer - Careers Speed Dating

13:00

Lunch

14:00

The BookTok Effect

Securing Your First Role
in Publishing

15:00

Audiobooks:
The Sound of the Future

Beyond the Books

16:00

The First Chapter Awards

Drinks reception at The Waggon and Horses

(All panels and workshops will run for approximately 45-50mins)

Welcome!

On behalf of SYP London, thank you all so much for coming to our Autumn conference for 2024, **Publishing Past, Present and Future**.

We are so delighted to be welcoming a line up of over 40 speakers across 10 engaging and timely discussions, exploring current industry trends and topics and forecasting for the future.

As always, SYP are so grateful for your support and we hope you find the day an insightful and aspirational look into your own futures in publishing.

Leyre Veras Preciado & Meghan Capper
SYP LDN Co-Chairs

With special thanks to our keynote ...

Vidisha Biswas

Founder & Managing Director, Footnote Press



Vidisha Biswas is the founder and Managing Director of Footnote Press. Vidisha was a co-owner and business development director at publishing collective Zed Books, where she managed the company's digital transformation strategy before it was acquired by Bloomsbury in 2020. She has also worked at the Morning Star, New Statesman and Verso Books.

Vidisha launched Footnote Press in partnership with Bonnier Books UK, a pioneering arrangement that combines the editorial independence and agility of an indie press with the sales and distribution capabilities of a world-leading publisher. Footnote Press are a mission-oriented publisher committed to driving social and narrative change. They seek to centre marginalised stories and perspectives – other ways of thinking being and organising that forefront diversity of experience while highlighting our shared humanity.

Commercial Fiction: A Guide for Aspiring Editors

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Tilda Key, Sphere Fiction



Tilda works with a range of crime and thriller brands, including Patricia Cornwell, Colleen Hoover, Clare Mackintosh and Sarah Pearse. She also acquires new stories that combine an arresting concept with captivating storytelling, especially from perspectives that are underrepresented in publishing. Her upcoming projects include a story of female enmity and friendship in 1800s China, a wickedly twisty thriller about a con artist who bites off more than she can chew, and a madcap murder mystery in the vein of *Knives Out*.

Rosanna Forte, Sphere Fiction



Rosanna commissions commercial and literary-commercial-crossover fiction at Sphere, with a particular emphasis on historical and gothic fiction, and crime and thrillers. She has been on the editorial teams for some of the biggest names in crime fiction, including Robert Galbraith, Richard Osman and Clare Mackintosh and has published numerous Sunday Times bestsellers since joining Sphere five years ago. She began her career at Penguin Random House on their entry-level access scheme. She loves novels that transport her to another world, be it an historical era or an immersive setting or the company of characters she'll be bereft to lose.

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James Luscombe, Zenko Studio



James Luscombe has 14 years of experience in publishing technology roles, with experience spanning Editorial, Royalties, Contracts, Rights, Sales, and Production. For the past three years, he has worked as an independent consultant, specialising in Biblio implementations and helping publishers streamline workflows and maximise the platform's potential for efficient publishing operations.

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Books in Translation: The Changing Landscape of International Fiction



Chair: Polly Peraza Brown, the Curtis Brown Group

Polly Peraza Brown is a Translation Rights Executive at the Curtis Brown Group and co-heads the Project Japan initiative at CB with an aim to represent world literature and bring it to a wider readership here in the UK and further afield. Prior to starting a career in translation rights, Polly completed a master's degree in Publishing Media from Oxford Brookes University and worked for three years at a literary consultancy.



Rose Green, Doubleday

Rose Green is a commissioning editor at Doubleday, publishing literary fiction. She was formerly at MacLehose Press where she edited the International Booker shortlisted *Standing Heavy* by Gau'Zi, tr. Frank Wynne, and Footnote Press where she published Hanako Footman's *Waterstones Debut Fiction Prize* shortlisted *Mongrel*, and Akutagawa Prize-winning author Kiyoko Murata, tr. Juliet Winters Carpenter, among others.



Xenia Stafford, Akoya Publishing

Xenia Stafford is the Managing Director of Akoya Publishing. She is a business and creative strategist with over 14 years of experience in strategy, branding, marketing, and production. With a background in Human Rights and a passion for intercultural communication, Xenia is helping Akoya as they prepare to launch their debut list in 2026.



Kristen Vida Alfaro, Tilted Axis Press

Kristen Vida Alfaro is the Publisher and Director of Tilted Axis Press. Since 2021, she has expanded the press' editorial framework and continues to acquire titles, develop international collaborations, and oversee market growth, particularly in Southeast Asia and North America. Prior to Tilted Axis, she worked at the Barbican and New York University. She also manages International Rights for Tate Publishing.



Rhea Kurien, Orion Fiction

Rhea Kurien is Editorial Director at Orion Fiction, where she publishes widely across commercial fiction, from BookTok romances to translated healing novels. Prior to Orion, she worked at HQ, Headline and Head of Zeus.

Literary Scouts: Reading for the Publishing Industry



Chair: Saida Azizova, Dialogue Books

Saida is currently an Assistant Editor at Renegade Books, Dialogue, where she loves working on all things fantasy and romance. Prior to this, she worked as assistant to three literary agents at C&W Agency - a dream first job in publishing. Saida has also been volunteering with SYP London for three years, first as Head of Events, then Co-Chair and now as Mentorship Officer.



Alice Townson, Zephyr Partnership

Alice works at Zephyr Partnership, an international scouting agency with publishing clients in twelve territories, and a range of British and European film/tv clients including Netflix UK. Prior to Zephyr, she worked at CTL Scouting and Maria B Campbell Associates. She started her career at a talent agency in Paris, and also worked in translation rights at Curtis Brown.



Florine Lips, RR Scouting

Florine Lips studied English and Spanish at Oxford University, graduating in June 2022. Florine is bilingual in English and Dutch, as well as speaking Spanish and Italian. She previously worked in legal publishing before joining the team at RR Scouting in January 2023.



Sophie Clarke, Daniela Schlingmann

Sophie joined Daniela Schlingmann Literary Scouting in 2019 after working at Penguin Random House Children's, Curtis Brown and Bell Lomax Moreton. Sophie scouts for children's and YA books, in addition to SFF and romance for all ages. She received recognition as a Rising Star by The Bookseller in 2021, and is now a Senior Scout at DSLS.

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Serena Arthur | Fiction Commissioning Editor |
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Chelsea Graham | Senior Editor | Bonnier Books

Publicity



Gabriella Drinkald | Senior Publicity Manager |
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Rights

Alicja Baranowska | Foreign Rights Manager | Quarto



Production

Demet Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik | Senior Production Controller | Little Tiger



Marketing

Jack Solloway | Marketing Manager | Bloomsbury Publishing, Academic Division



Sales

Victoria Ajayi | Key Account Manager | Penguin Random House Children's

The BookTok Effect: Turning Social Media Buzz into Sales

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Chair: Francesca Pavis, Booktoker

Francesca Pavis, best known as @pavisfrancesca or "your go-to thriller girly" on social media. With 180,000+ followers on BookTok, 70,000+ on Instagram, and 9,000+ subscribers on YouTube, she shares her love for thrillers and other bookish content. In addition to her online presence, Francesca has an extensive background in marketing, having worked across a range of sectors.



Robyn Watts, FairyLoot

Robyn Watts is the Book Production Manager at FairyLoot, specialising in crafting exceptional, collectible special editions, combining production expertise with a dedication to beautifully designed books. Previously, as Senior Production Controller at HarperCollins, I produced titles for HarperVoyager and served as the Lead for The Locked Library. With extensive experience in science fiction and fantasy publishing, Robyn is deeply passionate about the art of bookmaking.



Christina Storey, Harper Collins UK

Christina Storey is the Social Media and Ecommerce Manager at HarperCollins UK, where she manages the company's corporate Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok accounts. A specialist in Booktok and TikTok Shop, she played a pivotal role in HarperCollins becoming the first publisher on TikTok Shop, overseeing everything from content creation to operations. Christina was a recipient of the 2023 LBF Trailblazers award, she also founded the Publishing Hopefuls Facebook Group.



James Erskine, Rocket

James Erskine is an entrepreneur and currently runs the marketing and content business, Rocket. Rocket work with every leading publisher in the UK on marketing key releases including Penguin Random House, Harper Collins, Simon and Schuster, Andersen Press and Many More across content creation, social media, media partnerships and more.



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Chair: Clare Somerville, Kingston University

Clare Somerville is a Senior Lecturer in the department of Journalism, Publishing and Media at Kingston University, and module leader for careers and employability modules for MA Publishing and BA Media and Communication. She is also undergraduate Admissions Tutor and manages the work placements programme. She has held board level positions within major UK publishing houses, including Hachette Children's Group (where she was Deputy MD and Commercial Director), Harlequin Mills & Boon, Egmont and Reed Elsevier.



Suzy Astbury, Inspired Selection

Suzy Astbury is the CEO of Inspired Search & Selection, a leading recruitment agency in the publishing industry. With over two decades of experience, she excels at connecting talented individuals with their dream roles. Suzy's career began in publishing as a PA at the Quarto Group. She then took on Sales & Marketing responsibilities for QED and transitioned into foreign rights at Michael O'Mara, before moving into publishing recruitment. She is passionate about nurturing talent and helping individuals navigate their publishing careers.



Suzanne Collier, Bookcareers

Suzanne Collier is the founder of Bookcareers.com, the independent Careers Service for book publishing and a fully qualified Careers Advisor (RCDP). She has been shortlisted three times by the Career Development Institute for Career Coach of the Year and five times by the IIPG for Services to Publishing. She has over 40 years' experience of working in book publishing for both trade and academic publishers and a long association with the SYP, having chaired 5 times over 10 years. She is the author of *How to Job Search in Book Publishing: The Ultimate Insider's Guide*.

Laura Battle, Scholastic



Laura Battle is the Key Account Manager at Scholastic managing Waterstones, Asda and Tesco. Having completed her Masters in Publishing from Kingston University in 2019, she began her career within the industry at Hardie Grant (now Quadrille). Joining as the UK and International Sales Assistant, she was promoted to International Sales Executive and then moved across to be the Special Sales Executive. In 2022 she joined Pan Macmillan as Key Account Executive within the Supermarkets team, before moving to Abrams & Chronicle Books as Key Account Manager.

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'I wouldn't be in publishing now if it wasn't for my time at Kingston University.' **Chloe**

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Publishing



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Audiobooks: The Sound of the Future

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Chair: Nicholas Jones, Strathmore Publishing

Nicholas Jones started his publishing career at Michael Joseph, then worked on tie-ins, both book and audio, with Thames Television. In 1995 he established Strathmore Publishing (and in 2002 the Strathmore Studios). The company has recorded thousands of books with readers as diverse as Richard Adoyade, Emily Atack, Jessie Buckley, Alex George, David Mitchell, Michael Palin and Ant and Dec. Strathmore often commissions and records bespoke music.



Kate Bland, Spiracle Audiobooks

Kate Bland, founder of Spiracle Audiobooks which she and Professor Leigh Wilson set up in 2022 to offer a curated selection of literary fiction and non-fiction. Kate trained as a museum curator and worked initially in the visual arts before moving to production. Prior to Spiracle she ran Cast Iron Radio, an independent production company producing programmes for BBC Radio, podcasts, audio guides and increasingly audiobooks.



Jouda Fahari-Edine, Spotify

Jouda Fahari-Edine is a French -born & -trained publishing professional with a career spanning over 10+ years on foreign teams across France and the UK. Jouda has previously worked for companies such as PRH, Quarto, OUP, Thames & Hudson, Bayard Group and Gallimard. She made the jump in the summer 2024 to transition into Audiobooks. Her new role at Spotify focuses on the editorial curation of the platform for the French-speaking audiences in Europe.



Ravina Bajwa, Tonies

Ravina Bajwa has worked for eighteen years in the audiobook and spoken word industries. As a creative producer Ravina has commissioned and developed well-known audio adaptations for British authors and literary brands including Harry Potter, Roald Dahl, Penguin Classics and Ladybird Books, in addition to developing audio around children's media properties including Peppa Pig, Disney Classics and more.



Sarah Shrubbs, Hachette

Sarah Shrubbs has worked in publishing for more than thirty years, starting up Little, Brown's audiobook list in 2003 and running it for twenty years before moving on to become Group Audio Director at Hachette. Among the many recordings she has looked after are Robert Galbraith's Cormoran Strike series narrated by Robert Glenister, Tom Holland's Greek and Roman histories, autobiographies from musicians including James Blunt, Gary Numan, New Order and Brett Anderson, and the novels of Iain Banks and Iain M Banks.



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Chair: Jodie Williams, Pan Macmillan

Jodie Williams is a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion leader at Pan Macmillan with experience driving change across various sectors and industries. She has designed and led impactful initiatives, from large-scale leadership programmes to anti-racism workshops. Jodie is passionate about equity, inclusion, literature and learning, and beyond her professional roles, Jodie is committed to empowering others through personal projects such as a DEI retreats supporting women in times of change and a thriving Black women's book club that champions well-being and community.



Allegra Chapman, Watch This Sp_ce

Allegra Chapman is the Co-Creator of Watch This Sp_ce, a diversity and inclusion consultancy that enables organisations to take meaningful action on diversity and inclusion with measurable impact. Allegra is also an author, columnist, creative wellbeing practitioner and former publishing editor. In 2023, Allegra was named by f:Entrepreneur as one of the most inspirational female entrepreneurs in the UK.




Sabah Khan, Simon & Schuster UK

A former Bookseller Rising Star and one of the Publisher Association's People of Publishing 2024, Sabah Khan is Publicity Director (Adult, Fiction & Non-Fiction) at Simon & Schuster UK working across a variety of titles including Colleen Hoover, Britney Spears, Bob Mortimer and Ruth Ware. She was co-chair of Simon and Schuster's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council and has always been a key supporter and driver of diversity and inclusion initiatives. At HarperCollins she launched informal network groups for women as well as being a founding member of Elevate.



Sian Richefond, HarperFiction

Sian is Marketing Manager at HarperFiction, a division of HarperCollins Publishers. Having worked her way up from Marketing Assistant, she has worked on a wide range of campaigns of all genres and sizes, including George R.R. Martin, Dilly Court and breakout fantasy star Saara El-Arifi. She has won multiple awards for her work on campaigns such as Godkiller by Hannah Kaner, Babel by R.F. Kuang and most recently won Marketing Strategy of the Year at the Nibbies alongside her colleagues for their campaign on Rebecca Kuang's Yellowface.

A portrait of Ause Abdelhaq, a man with a beard and mustache, smiling. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a bright yellow-green with abstract teal and yellow shapes.

"I love that Pan Macmillan is a place where we endeavour to publish important, impactful titles. On any given day, I can be assured that I'm working on a book that might change someone's life."

Ause Abdelhaq
*Non-fiction editor and First
Chapter Awards Winner 2024*

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The logo for the Independent Publishers Guild (IPG), featuring the lowercase letters 'ipg' in a bold, green, sans-serif font.

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Eiman Munro
Volunteer

Eiman Munro is a community leader passionate about preserving heritage and amplifying Iraqi voices. She co-founded Hidden Histories CIC and secured over £70,000 in funding for Iraqi writers in Brent. Eiman supports aspiring writers through workshops and publishing projects, ensuring their stories are celebrated for future generations. She also volunteers with her local library to deliver books to those with access needs.



October Jones
Children's Librarian
GLL Wandsworth

Starting as a library assistant in 2023, they were promoted to Children's Librarian by 2024. October transformed Downham Library with *The Bigger Picture* initiative, introducing the community to comics and graphic novels. Known for championing spooky books, October also organises borough-wide programmes benefiting children, young people and families, and regularly contributes to literary festivals and events.



Ause Abdelhaq
Editor
Pan Macmillan

Ause Abdelhaq is a passionate book editor amplifying underrepresented voices. He has acquired impactful works, including Chris Smalls's memoir, *The Eyes of Gaza*, and *The Glass Cliff*. Ause advocates for workplace inclusion, serving on Pan Macmillan's RISE Network board, mentoring young professionals and championing equal opportunities and fair wages.



Sorina Marinescu
Owner
Blue Sheep Books

Sorina Marinescu is the founder of Blue Sheep Books in Wednesbury, a deprived area in the West Midlands. Sorina turned her passion for reading into a thriving community hub. As a proud LGBT+ advocate, Sorina creates a safe space for underrepresented voices and provides opportunities for local youth through work experience and affordable books for schools, believing that access to literature is essential for all children.

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The Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP) is proud to be a sponsor of the SYP's 75th anniversary conference. We are a non-profit body promoting excellence in English language editing. We support editorial and publishing professionals at every career stage with resources, training, guidance and support.

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Whether you're a publishing hopeful or starting to advance in the industry, the CIEP can help support your journey with skills and connections that make a difference. We're happy to celebrate the future of publishing with SYP and look forward to helping you build a successful career.



